

Family history reveals predisposition to multiple diseases

May 21 2014, by Anne Rahilly

Researchers have identified nine simple questions that can be used to identify people who may be at increased risk of various cancers, heart disease and diabetes because of their family history of these conditions.

The family history screening questionnaire can be used to provide insight into people's susceptibility to breast, ovarian, bowel and [prostate cancer](#), melanoma, [ischaemic heart disease](#) and type 2 diabetes.

These findings will lead to greater insight into the process of preventative treatment for cancer in primary care and provide a cost-effective intervention for tailored disease prevention in Australian primary care..

Lead researcher Professor of Primary Care Cancer Research at the University of Melbourne Jon Emery said this research is the first of its kind to validate the family history screening questionnaire as a tool to cover multiple conditions.

"No brief tool has been developed to cover a range of conditions in [primary care](#) that has been validated to the same extent as ours."

"This finding could be used as a screening tool in general practice to identify people who need a more detailed discussion about their family history of cancer, diabetes or [heart disease](#)," Professor Emery said.

"Some people may require referral to a genetics clinic to discuss genetic

testing, many more may require earlier cancer screening and lifestyle management," he said.

Family medical history remains the most relevant genetic risk tool in use in clinical practice.

Evidence suggests that having knowledge of a [family history](#) of a specific condition is associated with improved uptake of a range of disease-preventative activities, such as cancer screening and reduced sun exposure.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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